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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002394

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Special Envoy Mitchell to Israel, West Bank

Key stories in the media:

The media reported that U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Senator George Mitchell has arrived in the region. Israel Radio reported that he met with DM Ehud Barak yesterday and that he is scheduled to meet with PM Benjamin Netanyahu today. The Jerusalem Post said that expectations of progress in talks with Israel and the

Palestinian Authority are low, citing concern that the PA election campaign will make launching negotiations even more difficult than before. Maariv expects Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as saying during her visit to Israel and the PA that the U.S. administration is losing patience and is determined to swiftly bring about the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Maariv reported that Clinton will try to convince PA President Mahmoud Abbas to return to the negotiations. However, Maariv quoted a senior Israeli diplomatic official as saying: "We are not the problem, but the Palestinians, who present preconditions, are."

Both HaQaretz and Maariv devoted their lead stories to the presentation of President Abbas' negative views about PM Netanyahu's policies. HaQaretz reported that Israeli officials have told the newspaper that PA President Mahmoud Abbas is deeply suspicious of Netanyahu and is losing faith in his intentions to reach a peace agreement. "I know Netanyahu is pragmatic and everyone tells me he has changed," Abbas reportedly told the officials recently. "But I don't see it. I fear it's the same Netanyahu of 1996. How much longer can I still give him credit?" Abbas reportedly said he missed former PM Ehud Olmert, with whom he had "almost closed [a deal]." "And I'm willing to give Netanyahu one more chance. But we have no more than two to three weeks during which something must happen," an Israeli official quoted Abbas as saying. An Israeli source said Abbas was extremely frustrated by Netanyahu and the changes in Israel's policy, especially by the "extreme rhetoric." Abbas was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that not only has Netanyahu not advanced the diplomatic process and not done anything tangible for peace, but he continues building settlement and inflicting mortal wounds to the process.

HaQaretz reported that last night Croatian President Stjepan Mesic called President Shimon Peres to brief him on the details of a conversation he had held earlier that day with Syrian President Bashar Assad and relay another message from Assad about the possibility of resuming peace negotiations between the two countries. Peres then reportedly called PM Netanyahu and briefed him on the details of the conversation. Leading media quoted Turkey's new Ambassador to Israel, Ahmet Oguz Celikkol, as saying yesterday before an Israeli academic conference that good relations with Israel are part of Turkey's global aspirations.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Israel maintained a low profile on the issue of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's pledge not to retreat even an iota on his country's nuclear program, with no comment from PM Netanyahu and restrained remarks from DM Barak. According to the newspaper, this low-key response appeared to reflect a desire to avoid Israel "becoming the story," which is now focused on whether Tehran will accept the Vienna agreement. This morning Israel Radio reported that Iran rejected the terms of the agreement.

The media quoted Yonatan Ben-Artzi, the grandson of the slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, as saying yesterday at the official ceremony in memory of his grandfather at Mt. Herzl Cemetery in Jerusalem that leaders attending the event had led protests in which Rabin was called a murderer and traitor. The media reported that in his speech at the Knesset session commemorating Rabin, PM Netanyahu raised the possibility that extremists may carry out a similar assassination today. Media reported that, claiming that the popular rally in memory of Rabin in Tel Aviv tomorrow does not represent their views, left-wing leaders -- particularly from Meretz -- decided not to attend the demonstration. Maariv reported that, in his videotaped address to the rally, President Obama is expected to say that Yitzhak left us a legacy on that awful November night.

Maariv (Ben Caspit) reported on a meeting of senior diplomats from all over the world -- including Israelis -- in Morocco this week, which encompassed sincere, promising talks about peace and coexistence.

HaQaretz reported that the QBrigades of Abdullah Azzam, a Lebanon-based group linked to al-Qaida, claimed responsibility for a rocket salvo against Israel this week, saying the attack was in retaliation for Israel's crackdown on protesters at Jerusalem's

Temple Mount. The Jerusalem Post quoted Lebanese President Michel as saying in an interview with the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar that

one Qmust not rule outQ the possibility that Israel was behind the attack.

Maariv headlined a feature about the visit to Israel of USS Higgins as part of the Juniper Cobra 10 exercise with the banner, QWe Are Protected.

Citing the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, The Jerusalem Post reported that President Obama has named retired Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE), an QIsrael critic,Q to co-chair the PresidentQs Intelligence Advisory Board.

Israel Radio quoted a senior Hamas member as saying that the gap with Israel over the release of Gilad Shalit has narrowed and now concerns only 107 Palestinians whom Israel refuses to free. HaQaretz reported that Shimshon Liebman, who heads a special task force to win ShalitQs release, told the daily that both the task force and the Shalit family would develop their own strategy and resume intensive lobbying if the negotiations make little progress.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that Semyon Mogilevich, an Israeli-Russian oligarch, appears on the list of the FBIQs 10 most wanted criminals.

All media reported that a gunman shot and wounded two men in the parking lot of a North Hollywood, California synagogue early yesterday. Jewish schools and synagogues in the area were put on alert shortly afterward in the event that it was not an isolated attack. HaQaretz reported that the Anti-Defamation League expressed Qdeep regretQ over the incident.

The Jerusalem Post cited a nationwide Anti-Defamation League survey that found that only 12% of Americans hold anti-Semitic views.

Special Envoy Mitchell to Israel, West Bank:

Block Quotes:

I. QIn Favor of a Deal with Damascus

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (10/30): QThe Israeli approach to relations with Syria needs to be managed from the end to the start, and the end is a vision of regional peace between Israel and its neighbors. In parallel to efforts to reach a permanent settlement with the Palestinians and without hurting their interests, Israel must seek peace with Syria in the context of Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967: full and secure peace in return for complete withdrawal. Those who do not want such a deal will seek to undermine it using arguments of procedure.... In the past, Netanyahu spoke indirectly with Hafez Assad, the late father of the current leader in Damascus, through U.S. businessman Ron Lauder. The contacts failed and there is some dispute over what happened. There is no dispute, however, that seeking peace with Syria, through talks between chiefs of staff and shuttle diplomacy by secretaries of state, is a key element in Yitzhak Rabin's diplomatic legacy, which Netanyahu's Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, says should be seen through. Rabin's memory should extend beyond flowery speeches, eulogies, and arguing over the Oslo process. Energized efforts toward peace with Syria would perpetuate the Rabin legacy.

II. I Will Not Be Coming to Rabin Square Tomorrow

Former Meretz Knesset Member Zahava Gal-On wrote in HaQaretz (10/30): QThis is not my rally any more. This is no longer the rally of those committed to democracy and peace, those who recognize the need to divide the land, end the occupation, evacuate settlements, and establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Above all, this is no longer the rally of people who acknowledge and respect painful majority decisions even if they don't like them. So I will not be coming to the square on Saturday. Yitzhak Rabin was murdered because of the policy he charted. In the early years, when the memory was still fresh, the rally reminded us of Rabin's political path and of what he was murdered for. But as the years passed, the organizers rewrote history, toadied up to the right wing, and invited politicians from parties that refuse to compromise

and end the occupation. With the main speakers being people like Defense Minister Ehud Barak and opposition chairman Tzipi Livni, the captains of Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, why shouldn't Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar [Likud], who is by no means a member of Peace Now, also speak?.... By turning the rally on Saturday into a nonpolitical event, they are erasing the fact that the Prime Minister's assassination was entirely political. They are erasing the rabbis' incitement against Rabin and the balcony in Zion Square [in October 1995 in Jerusalem]. They are erasing the fact that an entire political camp was engaged in a campaign to delegitimize the Prime Minister by claiming that a government supported by Arab votes was illegitimate and had no mandate to give up parts of the Land of Israel. And thus they exonerate those political and public figures who were abettors and accomplices. Thus they take part in papering over the controversy and the rift. But no fake consensus can be allowed to cover up this basic truth.

III. QYes, Rabin Can Already Be Regretted

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (10/30): QThere is no need to agree with the path and consequences of Oslo to long for the late Yitzhak Rabin. Israeli society has few heroes.... Despite the wretched expression Qvictims of peace,Q there can be no doubt that had Rabin reached the recognition that the [peace] process had turned into an exercise in deception, he would have said this clearly. It is therefore possible to state that he believed in peace until the day of his death. Even this belief is a source of nostalgia. One should remember that RabinQs peace included [in IsraelQs possession] the entire Jordan Valley, the settlement blocs (Qsuch as Gush Katif,Q as he said in his last Knesset speech), and all of Jerusalem. Let us mention that what is now considered as RabinQs way is very far from his peace vision.

IV. QThe Week in Blood

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (10/30): QIt's been another dreadful week in the war of civilizations.... This is a war of civilizations in the sense that Muslim extremists with imperial ambitions are engaged in a zero-sum struggle against the values associated with modernity -- liberty, enlightenment, and tolerance. For now, the battle is being played out mostly in Muslim-majority lands, though New York, London, Madrid, and Israel's cities have also been killing fields. Western elites have tended to deny, downplay or reject outright the systemic nature of the Islamist menace. Under these circumstances, there has been no real will to mobilize Western publics for the sacrifices ahead.... Israelis have demonstrated that it is possible to defend their country with precisely the means [Philip] Alston [of the U.N. Human Rights Council, who this week took the Obama administration to task for its policy of targeted assassinations of terrorist chieftains] finds so distasteful against an enemy that is driven by an unfortunate -- some would say perverted -- reading of Islam. Like other Islamist groups, both Hamas and Hizbullah have no compunction about launching attacks from behind their civilian populations. Yet, contrary to the mendacious assertions of the Goldstone Report, our army has protected us without losing its soul.

CUNNINGHAM